



## The Dry Facts: Protecting Homes From Flood-Related Damage

### Full Mitigation Best Practice Story

#### *Milwaukee County, Wisconsin*

**Milwaukee, WI** - As basements dried and Milwaukee residents discarded water-soaked belongings, it was evident that flood-proofing needed to be done in regards to these saturated homes and basements.



"Even a rain of two inches over several hours can produce conditions for flooding in Milwaukee County," said Carl Stenbol, Assistant Director for Milwaukee County Division of Emergency Management.

After the June 1997 storm, emergency management staff began developing ideas to better educate homeowners about preventing flooding and sewer backup damages. The disaster declaration the county received in response to the \$78 million in damages enabled the department to apply for Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) funds through the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and Wisconsin Division of Emergency Management (WEM).

"Citizens were asking questions on how they could protect themselves, their property and belongings prior to actual flooding," said Midge Casperson, Milwaukee County Municipal Emergency Service Coordinator and project coordinator/producer for the community outreach video.

Mitigation techniques previously developed and tested could provide the answers to these homeowners' questions. But the challenge was how to get that information to the citizens of Milwaukee County.

"We wanted to put it in a format that was easy to understand and implement, and in a way that was accessible to our citizens," said Casperson.

The staff felt that visual demonstrations provide the best form of teaching. A "mitigation" video production was begun involving script development, actors, and technical expertise. While the county knew it would be a costly undertaking, state emergency management officials helped to determine that the HMGP was a perfect match.

The Milwaukee County received a grant of \$30,000 from HMGP to produce the video and a corresponding brochure. The final cost of production totaled \$40,000. The state and county each matched a \$5,000 contribution.

Utilizing experts, taking a hands-on approach throughout the entire production schedule, and having a plan for distribution were the successful elements of the project.

"I depended on the production people for what they are best in and researched with mitigation experts, like the Wisconsin mitigation officer and local municipal public works, to get the most up-to-date information and make it a well-rounded video on all aspects of flood-proofing. I worked closely with the production company every step of the way to ensure the accuracy of the content," said Casperson.

County-wide distribution included involving the Milwaukee Federated Library system that encompasses 19 libraries in the City of Milwaukee and the surrounding suburbs. "Librarians told me they had a hard time keeping the video on the shelf," Casperson said.

Other avenues of distribution and coverage included village halls and city administrators, newspaper stories relating to the video availability and local home improvement show featuring how-to segments from the video.

Timing helped make the video a success in a rather unfortunate way. The video debuted after the county experienced its second 100-year flood event within two years. People were eager to implement protective measures against further flooding damage after basements flooded a second time in two years. The video was able to lay out mitigation suggestions in a very understandable format.

#### Activity/Project Location

Geographical Area: **Single County (County-wide)**

FEMA Region: **Region V**

State: **Wisconsin**

County: **Milwaukee County**

#### Key Activity/Project Information

Sector: **Private**

Hazard Type: **Flooding**

Activity/Project Type: **Education/Outreach/Public Awareness**

Activity/Project Start Date: **07/1997**

Activity/Project End Date: **Ongoing**

Funding Source: **Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP); Local Sources; State sources**

#### Activity/Project Economic Analysis

Cost: **\$40,000.00 (Estimated)**

#### Activity/Project Disaster Information

Mitigation Resulted From Federal  
Disaster? **Yes**

Federal Disaster #: **1180 , 07/07/1997**

Value Tested By Disaster? **Unknown**

Repetitive Loss Property? **Unknown**

#### Reference URLs

Reference URL 1: **<http://www.floodsmart.gov/>**

Reference URL 2: **<http://emergencymanagement.wi.gov/>**

## Main Points

- After the June 1997 storm, emergency management staff began developing ideas to better educate homeowners about preventing flooding and sewer backup damages.
- Mitigation techniques previously developed and tested could provide the answers to these homeowners' questions. But the challenge was how to get that information to the citizens of Milwaukee County.
- The Milwaukee County received a grant of \$30,000 from HMGP to produce the video and a corresponding brochure. The final cost of production totaled \$40,000. The state and county each matched a \$5,000 contribution.



Seven inches of rain flooded Milwaukee County